



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 24, 2006

FACT SHEET

ADDITIONAL FIRE-RESCUE EQUIPMENT AND BUILDING CODE CHANGES ENHANCE SAFETY OF SAN DIEGANS THREE YEARS AFTER 2003 FIRESTORM

On the three-year anniversary of the Cedar Fire, enhanced building codes enacted by the City's Development Services Department, and additional brush fire equipment and technology acquired by its Fire-Rescue Department, have helped to better position San Diego to prevent and fight future wild fires.

History:

On October 25, 2003, San Diego County was ravaged by the now famous firestorms that burned for nearly four days. Three separate fires burned that week: the Paradise Fire; the Otay Fire; and the largest of the fires, the Cedar Fire. Of the three, the Cedar Fire is the only one that burned within the City of San Diego.

Scope of the Firestorms of 2003

- Total Acres Burned : 376,237 in the County of San Diego; 28,676 in the City of San Diego
- Lives lost: 16 people in the County, no one died as a result of the fires in the City
- Structures lost: 2,095 in the County, 335 in the City of San Diego
- Property value lost: \$450 million in the County, \$204 million in the City of San Diego
- City Fire resources committed: 500-plus personnel daily, over 3 days

Three years later, most of the homes located in the City of San Diego that were destroyed in the fires have been rebuilt and new building codes have been enacted.

A total of 317 houses burned in the City of San Diego—312 in Scripps Ranch, and 5 in Tierrasanta.

Since that time most of the homes have been rebuilt:

Number of building permits applied for:	311
Number of permits issued:	310
Number of permits pending (not issued):	1
Number of homes built and occupied (completed):	282
Number of homes under construction (inspection phase):	28
Number of burned homes with no permit submittal	6

The City's Response to the Cedar Fire

New Building Codes Enacted:

A number of changes were made to the City's building codes as a result of lessons learned during the Cedar Fire. The City's Development Services Department worked closely with architects and building engineers to develop new standards for safer homes in areas subject to wildfires and implemented emergency regulatory revisions to the Building Code. The revisions include:

- 1) Amending the Municipal Code to require Class "A" roofing assembly for all new buildings, and throughout the roof of all existing buildings where more than 25 percent of the total roof area is replaced over a 12-month period.
- 2) Amending the Municipal Code to prohibit the use of wood shake or wood shingle roof coverings on all new roofs, and to require the removal and replacement of all wood roof coverings within 25 years. The entire roof of all existing buildings covered with wood roof covering is required to be replaced with a Class "A" roofing including no wood coverings where more than 25 percent of the total roof area is replaced over a 12-month period.
- 3) Changing the Municipal Code to now require additional fire resistant building materials and fire safety systems for all buildings subjected to fire hazards adjacent to high fire hazard areas.
- 4) Adding new building and brush management regulations to the Municipal Code. Brush management is required to reduce fire hazards around structures by providing an effective fire break between all structures and contiguous areas of native or naturalized vegetation. The new regulations provide for a uniform 100 ft deep defensible space.

This brush management ordinance was approved for areas outside of the Coastal Zone. Regulations for the Coastal Zone are pending Coastal Commission certification targeted for November 2006.

In addition, the Development Services Department worked closely with three homeowners' associations in the area to develop new allowable standards for the units which replaced those lost in the fire. Their collaboration resulted in a community with a much more diverse unit type and architecture.

"In assessing how the City could best address the problems presented by the Cedar Fire, our goal has been two fold: First, we want to do whatever we can to prevent a fire of that magnitude from happening again; and second, we want to ensure that our fire fighters, rescue teams and citizen volunteers are given the best equipment possible to fight brush fires when they occur. I believe we've taken major steps toward achieving this goal."

-- Mayor Jerry Sanders

Fire-Rescue Equipment and Resources Added:

Helicopter Program:

- Established a permanent City multi-mission helicopter program
- Acquired and installed night vision equipment and trained crew members and pilots. Copter 1 can perform the same missions at night that it can during the day.

Fire and Rescue Equipment:

- Fire-Rescue added 16 new apparatus including engines, trucks, brush engines, haz-mat, heavy rescue, and light & air
- Additional equipment acquired specifically for fighting brush fires includes:
 - Web gear (harnesses for carrying equipment)
 - RIC bags (rescue equipment)
 - Wildland hose packs (backpacks that allow firefighters to carry hoses long distances)
 - Increased shelf stock of personal protective equipment (brush and structure gear)
- Acquisition and installation of Mobile Data Computers (MDC) on all engines and trucks. The MDCs provide electronic computerized information to speed responses in serving public. MCDs provide responding firefighters and ambulance crews with:
 - real time information about the incident provided by dispatchers
 - maps and instantaneous driving directions
 - information about the area, business or structures that are affected by the emergency
- Enhanced radio and 911 communications equipment and systems
- Increased outfitting of Ready Reserve pumper fleet – backup fleet of equipment (13 total).

Enhanced Public Safety and Response Programs:

- Implemented community outreach program providing fire safety information and other public education information to community groups (total of 35 presentations post Cedar Fire).
- Secured grant funding and implemented Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program. 542 citizens trained as CERT volunteers and 18 teams established throughout city.
- Completed response plans—called I-Zones—for 23 targeted areas of the city considered to be high fire hazard canyon areas spanning more than 900 linear miles. These detailed plans contain the geography of the areas; access and evacuation routes; staging areas; as well as the types of vegetation, structures, businesses and dangers in the specific area where the emergency is located.
- Initiated a Damage Assessment Team program.

What can the public do to help?

Preparation is the best prevention.

There are plenty of things that residents can do to help prevent fires around their homes:

- Make sure your fire and smoke alarms work properly.
- Plan an evacuation route—not only out of your home, but also out of your neighborhood.
 - Immediately evacuate if told to do so by police or fire personnel.
 - Don't wait to be told to leave if a fire or other disaster is threatening your home.
- Be diligent about brush and weed abatement.
- Prune and maintain plants and trees on your property.
- Clean gutters and roofs of leaves and debris.
- Install fireproof screens on your chimney outlet.
- Keep woodpiles at least 30 feet away from any structures.
- Do not dump grass or leaves into canyons.